

## STATE OF MAINE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION 18 STATE HOUSE STATION 242 STATE STREET AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0018

WILLIAM M. NUGENT STEPHEN L. DIAMOND COMMISSIONERS

July 19, 2002

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TO:

**Telephone Carriers** 

FROM:

Derek Davidson, Director, Consumer Assistance Division

SUBJECT:

New Consumer Protection Rules for Telecommunications Carriers

- Chapters 290, 291 and 292

The new consumer protection rules for telecommunications carriers, Chapters 290, 291 and 292, went into effect on June 30, 2002. Copies of the rules, as well as the Order Adopting the Rules, can be obtained from the Commission's web page at: <a href="http://www.state.me.us/mpuc/">http://www.state.me.us/mpuc/</a>. See Docket No. 2001-852.

As a general matter, the Commission will allow carriers until November 1, 2002, to transition their operations into compliance with the new rules. Thus, prior to November 1, carriers may continue to bundle local charges, toll charges, and optional services on disconnection notices. However, during the period from today until November 1, 2002, ETCs must comply with the new requirement that prohibits the disconnection of local service for non-payment of toll service. Thus, during this interim period, if a situation exists where an actual disconnection of local service will take place, the ETC must segregate the local service charges from other charges and only consider the local charges in making a final determination regarding disconnection. This is similar to the process ETCs currently follow with lifeline customers. During this interim period, ETCs must apply payments that are insufficient to pay the entire amount due to the basic service portion of the bill first. Any remaining amounts can then be applied to non-basic services. The disaggregation of payments may take place on a monthly basis or at the time of the pending disconnection. After November 1, 2002, carriers must include only charges that pertain to the particular service being disconnected.

After November 1, 2002, the Commission will begin citing carriers for any violations of the new rules. We encourage carriers to conduct the necessary training of their personnel, revise their internal policies, and change their billing systems as soon as possible so that the transition may be timely.

Any inquiries regarding implementation of the rules should be directed to Betty Bero (207-287-1399) of the Consumer Assistance Division.

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